

## THE LITERARY LANDSCAPE

# That Dream Shall Have a Name

## New book examines how Native writers can transform understanding of “America”

By Ken Egan

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We love stories because they have the power to transport us to new places, new ways of thinking and feeling, new ways of living.

David L. Moore’s remarkable *That Dream Shall Have a Name: Native Americans Rewriting America* shows how stories by Native writers can transform our understanding of “America,” leading to a deeper understanding of the many peoples who inhabit the United States and opening the possibility of reclaiming “an original relation” with the land.

## Lessons for us all

Moore began this project as a teacher of college students, but he ends up becoming a teacher for us all. He explains at the start that his students persistently raise five questions about American Indian writing, questions that form the core of his study: sovereignty, community, authenticity, identity, and humor (or more broadly, irony).

*That Dream Shall Have a Name* engages each of these questions in turn, though it would be a mistake to imagine the book as a linear argument in which each term is self-contained and isolated. Instead, Moore shows how these questions form a circle of meaning, each term gaining new significance as it is rethought in context of another term. So, for instance, the reader learns that sovereignty is impossible without community, and that authenticity is inescapably bound up with these first two principles.

Moore shares these insights in concise, witty prose that allows the reader to glean many ideas in the space of a few words. His treatment of enduring stereotypes of Indians is a good case in point: “Although America does not view its authentic self as contemporary with Benjamin Franklin, it views ‘authentic’ American Indians just so. True Americans need not wear powdered wigs like Benjamin Franklin’s contemporaries, yet true Indians must wear feathers” (p. 243).

## Illuminating Native stories

The writer grounds his reflections on these crucial matters in the writings of five Native authors who cover the time span from the early 19th century to the present day: William Apess, Sarah Winnemucca, D’Arcy McNickle, Leslie Marmon Silko and Sherman Alexie. We gain new insight, new appreciation for these writers’ transformative stories as we re-approach their work through the five questions.

To take an important example for Montana readers, D’Arcy McNickle’s novels *The Surrounded* and *Wind from an Enemy Sky* emerge as far richer, far more complicated, far more hopeful than one might have supposed on first acquaintance. McNickle is typically read as a tragic writer, one who uses his fiction to show how promising Indian and mixed-blood youths are defeated by an indifferent, even hostile world.

Moore asks us to read these novels with new eyes through the lens of his five questions. I came away realizing that McNickle is

far funnier, far more revealing of native sovereignty, and far more committed to celebrating native community than I had supposed.

Archilde’s gesture of seeming defeat at the end of *The Surrounded* – his surrender – points toward the possibility of sovereignty as sacrifice, that is, demonstrating native independence and deep ethics by giving up the self in order to protect the dignity of others: “The low point must be the only place of honest regeneration” (p. 186).

## Beyond the frontier story

Though there is great pleasure – many aha moments – to be gained through these new ways of reading familiar books, Moore has a more profound purpose: He asks the reader to contemplate how Indian writers can help all of us tell a new story about these United States that we share. Is it possible that stories

such as Archilde’s can motivate us to set aside old mythologies and re-see our relations with both fellow Americans and the land itself?

Moore’s answer is emphatically yes. He devotes much of his most impassioned writing to asking us to move beyond the frontier story of America’s settlement – the story of a Eurameri-

can culture marching across the continent to birth a new civilization created out of the crucible of conflict with native peoples and a harsh land.

Instead, Native writers show us a multitude of people living well in many places with a sense of the sacred meaning of their specific landscapes. Instead of conquest, think a coming together, learning from each other, forming a circle of understanding, setting aside the notion of a superior culture dictating terms.

And that’s why Moore anchors his book in a remarkable passage from Simon Ortiz’s collection, *From Sand Creek*.

That dream  
shall have a name  
after all,  
and it will not be vengeful  
but wealthy with love  
and compassion  
and knowledge.  
And it will rise  
in this heart  
which is our America.

– From *Sand Creek*,  
Simon Ortiz



“Having taught and loved Native American literature for many years, I wanted to convey the excitement of finding a way of seeing the world – and America – in a way different from the norm. I wanted to share how it feels to read stories that open the mind and heart to the real interconnections in the soul and body of this land. To see and act in light of those connections might change us all. And it might nudge history toward justice after centuries of mistreatment and misunderstanding.”

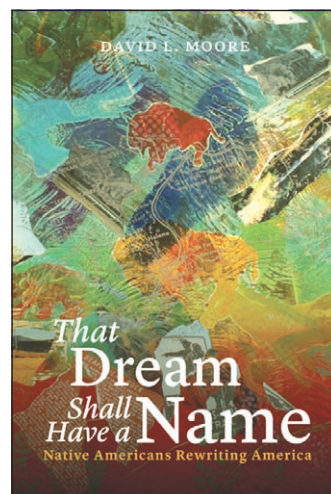
– David L. Moore

He asks us to open ourselves to the possibility of re-imagining community and identity in the United States, to set aside conflict and

domination for love and compassion, to learn as if for the first time the intrinsic dignity and value of the many Native communities that have not only survived but thrive in contemporary America

*That Dream Shall Have a Name* offers us the pleasure of reading stories with new eyes and the possibility of imagining new ways of thinking, feeling, and living. David L. Moore has worked magic – we need only allow it to happen by

spending time with this important, eloquent book.



## MONTANA POET LAUREATE

11:05

By Tami Haaland  
From *Breath in Every Room*

This is my tired poem when the ash leaves turn and willows by the river sift theirs to the ground; this is my turning in poem, my singing poem about the dog curled into old blankets and cats rattling dishes in the sink. This is for sleep, for you who have begun to sink into the deep water of dreams where I am swimming to meet you in tall weeds and we wait for the next big fish. This is my swimming poem when we rise to its belly, hold to its spiked fins and follow it into the open waters of this lake.



Tami Haaland



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## Montana Film Office wins international award

It’s the goal of the Montana Film Office to make sure that every platform and media available has a chance to capture that unique spirit that only Montana can bring. So, the film office collaborates with marketing partners throughout the year to create inventive campaigns, brand efforts, and marketing tools to highlight the best the Big Sky can offer.

This year the Association of Film Commissioners International recognized the efforts of the Montana Film Office and their partner, Partners Creative, an integrated communications firm out of Missoula, in marketing Montana to the film industry. The office took third place for both their logo and digital video assets.

“It’s exciting for us to win an award like this,” said Film Commissioner Deny Staggs. “We work hard to keep Montana competitive in the film industry. Our partnerships and efforts in marketing are just one piece of our strategy, and it’s great to see recognition of those efforts.”